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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0248
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4205
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0997
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0806
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0210
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0656
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1648
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002202

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, INR/EAP, EAP/PD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [PTER](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: EXTREMIST RALLY DRAWS HUGE CROWD, BUT MANY BIG NAMES FAIL TO SHOW

REF: A. A) JAKARTA/OPS CENTER 08/12/2007 TELCON

[¶](#)B. B) JAKARTA 2187

Classified By: POL/C Joseph Legend Novak, reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

[¶](#)1. (C) A rally sponsored by the extremist Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) party on August 12 drew a huge crowd to a Jakarta stadium. Many of the promised big name speakers failed to turn up, however. POL/C expressed concern to officials of Muhammadiyah (one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia) about its chairman's participation in the event. The rally was conducted peacefully and HTI's political profile gained a boost from it. A wrap-up of media reaction is contained in para 11.
End Summary.

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HTI's Show of Strength

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[¶](#)2. (SBU) HTI held its well-publicized half-day "International Conference on the Caliphate" on August 12 in a downtown Jakarta stadium (ref b). According to various reports, between 70,000 to 100,000 people were in attendance, a grouping which basically filled Senayan Stadium. At least half the attendees were women apparently bused in for the event.

[¶](#)3. (U) There was a large, but generally unobtrusive police presence in and around the stadium. There were no reports of violence or arrests.

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Many Big Names Not There

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[¶](#)4. (SBU) HTI failed, however, to deliver on many of its promised speakers. Key Indonesian personalities including two sitting GOI ministers, charismatic preacher Zainuddin MZ, and former Speaker of the National Legislature (MPR) Amien Rais all decided not to attend. Habib Rizieq Shihab, head of the thuggish Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI), claimed a colleague's hospitalization took precedence--a transparent

excuse given that HTI organizers told the press that the police had warned Rizieq not to deliver his planned speech. We understand that Jemmah Islamiyah co-founder Abu Bakar Bashir also heeded police warnings and did not attend.

¶5. (SBU) Various HTI officials did deliver remarks, including the kick off and concluding speeches. In addition, representatives of other Indonesian Muslim groups delivered brief speeches, including a regionally-based Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) cleric; a member of the Islamic Clerics' Council (MUI) from South Sumatra, and a representative from the PERSIS (Islamic Union) movement. Prominent Indonesian cleric Abdullah Gymnastiar, known as Aa Gym, also spoke.

¶6. (U) Three speakers from outside of Indonesia (representing Hizbut Tahrir branches in Sudan and Denmark, as well as a Japanese Islamic group) did deliver remarks as planned. Immigration officials, however, turned away two of their colleagues, one from Australia (Ismail Al-Wahwah) and another from the UK, when they arrived at Jakarta's airport. It was not clear why the two were prevented from entering Indonesia.

¶7. (U) Most speakers' remarks focused on respect for the concept of "Khalifah" (or caliphate), claiming that its re-creation would help bring justice to the world. There was criticism of Israel and the U.S.

¶8. (U) In addition to the speeches, the rally included a pantomime of western countries (the U.S., Russia, France, and the UK, among others) suppressing the world's Islamic majority countries, only to be "liberated" by a group of students carrying Hizbut Tahrir's black and white flag. During the performance, the announcer sharply criticized the

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West for allowing Serbia to kill Bosnians and the U.S. for supporting Israel.

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Muhammadiyah Chair Attends
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¶9. (SBU) The most well-known Indonesian leader to attend the event was Din Syamsuddin, the head of Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second-largest mass-Muslim organization with an estimated 35 million followers. Syamsuddin delivered brief remarks, reportedly stating that the "international caliphate" was a good idea, as long as it could be accomplished in concert with the Indonesian focus on national sovereignty -- "Khalifah shouldn't undermine the inclusiveness and pluralism of the nation," he declared.

¶10. (C) At an August 13 meeting at Muhammadiyah headquarters in Jakarta, POL/C expressed concern about Syamsuddin's participation in the event. POL/C noted to the several Muhammadiyah officials present that their organization had a "mainstream" reputation, which could only be tarnished by association with HTI and its related branches around the world. Moreover, the whole concept of re-establishing a Caliphate was not in line with democratic and pluralistic thinking, long a hallmark of the organization's worldview. Sudibyo Markus, a top-tier Muhammadiyah official, replied that Din Syamsuddin was only trying "to build bridges" to other Muslim groups in Indonesia. He did not support violence and had made that clear to HTI.

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Media Wrap-Up
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¶11. (U) The conference received balanced coverage across a wide range of media outlets in Indonesia, with generally factual reports and images. The most influential daily newspapers all focused on statements to the effect that a caliphate is not a threat, but rather a historical fact.

Leading moderate Islamic-orientated daily "Republika" and leading nationwide daily "Kompas" quoted Din Syamsuddin, and other dailies carried pictures of the throng in attendance. Televised reporting also fixated on the size of the crowd. The press did not focus on Abu Bakar Bashir and his apparent decision not to speak at the event (made at the behest of the police).

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A Net Positive for HTI

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¶12. (C) While HTI was unable to deliver on some of its promises for the rally, it nevertheless marked a big step up for the group which to date has primarily been a campus movement. HTI has now emerged as a significant player among pro-Sharia groups whose events can draw tens of thousands of people from across Indonesia, a status previously reserved for the Islamist Prosperous Justice Party (PKS).

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